

## **Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council**

**November 14, 2008**

### **Legislative and Communications Committee Meeting**

**Present:** Kim Chase, Jane Happe, Carol Fichter, Heather Gill, Carrie Rasmussen, Ruth Miller, Betty Medinger, Kathy Halverson-Rigatuso, Pat Urzedowski

Carol Fichter indicated that Governor Heineman has been elected to chair the National Governor's Association on Education and Workforce Development. Carol thought it would be helpful to know what issues the committee is addressing to determine what interests the Governor is pursuing on the committee. Ruth Miller suggested it would be a topic to include in the meeting with the Governor when we present the 2008 Report to the Governor on the status of early childhood.

#### **Interim Study**

Kim Chase wondered if there was an update on the legislative interim study. Betty Medinger indicated that the Nebraska Children and Families foundation was taking the lead on the interim study. Becky Veak and Jen Hernandez have been meeting with senators one on one since there are so many new members of the legislature. Most of their work has been to inform senators about the importance of early childhood, but they are not asking for anything specific. There are only about 5 or 6 senators still in office that were there when the early childhood endowment act passed. There is a lot of preliminary work that has to be done to help senators understand the importance of early childhood.

They are putting together a draft of possible things to introduce in a bill on early childhood education. They are estimating what things might cost. We still anticipate that Senators Adams will put together a legislative bill. There might be a reception for senators in conjunction with another event. They would like to bring in a national speaker again to address brain research, possibly Jack Shonkoff.

#### **Legislative and Communications Committee Conference Calls**

Kim Chase asked if we would be hosting conference calls during the legislative session. The calls will address the status of legislative bills related to early childhood care and education. Terry indicated that we have generally scheduled calls for the third Thursday of the month. Terry wondered if it would be better to do the calls during the afternoon from 1:00 PM-2:00 PM everyone agreed that was a better time for them. Terry will send out dates and times to committee members.

#### **Child Care Licensing Revisions**

Pat Urzedowski addressed some of the history involved in revising the child care regulations. The last revision of the child care regulations was completed in 1994. The regulations passed and the governor at the time indicated he did not want to see any further child care regulations while he served.

In 1999-2000 proposed revisions to the child care regulations were developed. During public hearing there was mixed perspectives expressed during the hearing. Some people indicated the regulations were too onerous, others indicated that the regulations didn't go far enough. Some of the areas of concern in the regulations were child:staff ratio, group size and room size. The regulations did get to the attorney general's office, but were not signed. They eventually came back from the governor's office unsigned and with no comments.

In 2003-2004 the Department of Health and Human Services began to work on the child care regulations again. They had a stakeholder group including several ECICC members at the time serve on the stakeholder group to discuss regulations revisions. They worked over six months and came up with possible changes. During this revision process they are attempting revise all chapters of the child care regulations, including a new chapter on school-age care.

The revisions were completed in January 2006. The regulations were given to the Department of Health and Human Services Regulatory Analysis and Integration Division (RAID). It took two years for the RAID team to review the regulations. In December 2007 the regulations were sent to the Directors of the Public Health Division, the Governor's Policy Research Office, and others. Senator Howard, Senator Chamber, and Senator Erdman have also received copies to review. They will be sharing the drafts with providers from their districts. Comments from all groups are due back by November 21.

90% of the current regulations remain unchanged. The bulk of the changes are being made to reflect what we know about safe sleep practices and to institute changes that will have minimal cost impacts on child care programs. There are additional training requirements included in the regulations, but existing programs and staff are given sufficient time to comply with the new training requirements. Child care providers will need to read to children daily, they will also need to share information with parents about the children. Some of the revisions have been questioned by the Governor's Policy Research Office, and the directors, but to date they have not been removed or changed.

The training requirements will include everyone having early learning guidelines training, current programs will have several years to get the training. New programs will need to get the training within the first year of operation. Management training will be required for all directors. Family child care homes will have an abbreviated version of the management training that they can attend. Anyone who has previously taken management training or early learning guideline domain training will have already met the requirements. The final training area will be the 4 hour "Safe with You" training which addresses, safe sleep, shaken baby syndrome, and child abuse prevention.

The next meeting will be with the Governor's Policy Research Office and the Department of Health and Human Services. The meeting should indicate whether they can take the regulations out for public hearing.

The Department of Health and Human Services will have all draft chapters on their website. They will also have a companion document that show what changes have been made to the regulations and provides rationale for those changes.

Committee members indicated they were glad to see movement with the regulations. They are also glad to know that there will be a companion piece developed that can highlight the regulation changes and explain the rationale.

People asked about the requirements for CPR and First Aid. There still must be one person onsite with CPR and First Aid certification. However, there is a change in the regulations limiting the number of hours a staff person can claim for completing the training. Of the 12 hours required for annual continuing education, no more than 3 hours of the training can be for CPR and First Aid training. The Department wants people to focus their energies on completing the Early Learning Guidelines training.

Carol Fichter acknowledged Pat Urzedowski's work to increase training requirements within the regulations. Carol asked Pat if any concessions had to be made in the regulations. Pat did indicate that although they had hoped to have all regulations require a minimum of high school diploma. The regulations for family child care homes were revised to eliminate the requirements for a high school diploma.

Pat did indicate that she will need to have people show up at the public hearings and testify. She indicated it would be most helpful if people could support these regulations. She knows that there are many things that need to be added to the regulations, but hopes that we can make clear that these regulations need to be passed. Any suggestions for revising future versions of the regulations or suggestions for what additionally could be included in future revisions will be welcomed, but please make sure that you support the changes currently proposed.

Pat will present the same information to the full Council later this afternoon.